

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 DOE-15 H-02 INR-10 INT-05 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 ICA-20 OES-07 SP-02
SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 PA-02 /140 W
-----022517 230432Z /13

R 221915Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 696
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS MONTREAL 1259

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ENRG, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC WHITE PAPER ON ENERGY

REF: (A) 1977 MONTREAL 2006; (B) 1977 MONTREAL 1849

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: QUEBEC GOVERNMENT HAS RELEASED AN ENERGY WHITE PAPER, PREPARED UNDER STEWARDSHIP OF ENERGY MINISTER GUY JORON, THAT MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS ON COURSE OF QUEBEC'S ENERGY POLICY THROUGH END OF CENTURY. PAPER PLACES EMPHASIS ON CONSERVATION AND ON INCREASING RELIANCE ON DOMESTIC HYDRO-ELECTRIC RESOURCES. END SUMMARY.

2. GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY PAPER SAYS THAT BASIS OF POLICY SHOULD BE DOUBLING OF RELIANCE ON DOMESTIC HYDRO-ELECTRIC SOURCES, WHICH NOW ACCOUNT FOR 22 PERCENT OF QUEBEC'S ENERGY CONSUMPTION. THIS WOULD INCREASE TO 41 PERCENT BY 1990 AND TO 50 PERCENT BY YEAR 2000, WHILE DEPENDENCE ON PETROLEUM WOULD BE CUT FROM PRESENT 70 PERCENT TO NO MORE THAN 45-50 PERCENT BY 1990, REPRESENTING A SAVING OF ABOUT DOLS 15 BILLION. GOVERNMENT SAYS THAT EMPHASIS ON HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER PLUS CONSERVATION MEASURES WOULD ALLOW QUEBEC TO GET ALONG UNTIL END OF CENTURY WITHOUT EXPANDING NUCLEAR ENERGY
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CAPACITY BEYOND GENTILLY PLANT NOW BEING CONSTRUCTED, AND GENTILLY 3, SCHEDULED FOR CONSTRUCTION BEFORE END OF 1989.

3. IN TERMS OF OVERALL ENERGY USE, WHITEPAPER STATES THAT CONSERVATION MEASURES AND NEW POLICY COULD RESULT IN REDUCTION OF ENERGY USE DURING PERIOD BETWEEN 1978 AND 1990 BY 23 PERCENT COMPARED TO WHAT WOULD BE CASE IN ABSENCE OF ANY NEW POLICY. AT SAME

TIME, PAPER POINTS OUT THAT NATURAL TREND OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN QUEBEC HAS BEEN DOWNWARD. COMPARED TO AVERAGE ANNUAL INCREASE OVER LAST 25 YEARS OF 5.7 PERCENT, ANNUAL INCREASE HAS BEEN LESS THAN 2.5 PERCENT SINCE 1970. GOVERNMENT PREDICTS THAT TREND, REFLECTING LOWER BIRTH RATES AND BRAKING OF SURBURBAN EXPANSION, WOULD INDICATE ANNUAL PER CAPITA INCREASE OF NOR MORE THAN 2 PERCENT ANNUALLY FROM OW UNTIL 1990, WHEN ANNUAL RATE OF INCREASE WOULD FALL TO ABOUT 1 PERCENT OVER FOLLOWING TEN YEARS. PROGRAM OF CONSERVATION ENVISAGED BY GOVERNMENT COULD REDUCE THESE GROWTH RATES TO 1.2 PERCENT
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AND ALMOST ZERO, RESPECTIVELY.

4. GOVERNMENT ALSO SEES EXPANDED ROLE FOR NATURAL GAS, PROVIDED THAT THERE ARE GUARANTEES OF LONG TERM SUPPLIES AT COMPETITIVE PRICES. UNDER RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES, SHARE OF NATURAL GAS IN QUEBEC'S ENERGY CONSUMPTIN COULD BE DOUBLED FROM PRESENT 6 PERCENT BY 1990. PRESENT NATURAL GAS PIPELINE NETWORK WOULD HAVE TO BE EXTENDED, AND GOVERNMENT SAID THAT IT IS INTERESTED IN LOCATING A PORT TERMINAL FOR LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS IN PROVINCE.

5. CONSERVATION MEASURES CONTEMPLATED BY GOVERNMENT WOULD INCLUDE POSSIBLE TAX ON AUTOMOBILES, EITHER BASED ON WEIGHT OR ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF BUILDING CODES DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE ENERGY LOSS. GOVERNMENT EXPECTS, HOWEVER, THAT ONE OF MAJOR FACTORS IN CUTTING CONSUMPTION WILL BE STEADILY INCREASING COST OF ENERGY. REPORT SAYS THAT RELATIVE PRICE INDEX OF ENERGY, WHICH
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ROSE 10 PECENT BETWEEN 1970 AND 1975 AFTER DECLINING IN PREVIOUS YEARS, IS EXPECTED TO RISE BY 78 PECENT BETWEEN 1975 AND 1990, AND BY 57 PERCENT OVER LAST TEN YEAR OF CENTURY. FINALLY, GOVERNMENT SAID THAT IS WAS PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE DOLS 250 MILLION OVER NEXT 12 YEARS TO A CROWN CORPORATION TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES, SUCH AS SOLAR ENERGY, WOOD, PEAT AND WIND.

6. CONSULATE DOES NOT YET HAVE COMPLETE TEXT OF GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY WHITE PAPER, BUT WILL SEND COMPLETE SETS UPON RECEIPT TO EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT. FOR BACKGROUND AND COMMENTS ON QUEBEC ENERGY SITUATION, SEE REFTELS.
ERICKSEN

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PAPERS, ENERGY, POLICIES, CONSERVATION, HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTRE01259
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780261-0772
Format: TEL
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780631/aaaabais.tel
Line Count: 106
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2d94bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2248603
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QUEBEC WHITE PAPER ON ENERGY
TAGS: ENRG, CA, (JORON, GUY)
To: STATE OTTAWA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2d94bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014